United Nations ST/IC/2015/13

Secretariat

5 June 2015

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff and other authorized users of information and communications technology resources**

From: The Assistant Secretary-General/Chief Information Technology Officer

Subject: **E-mail filter upgrade**

1. The purpose of the present circular is to inform staff members and other authorized users of information and communications technology (ICT) resources about an upgrade to the Secretariat's e-mail filter system.

2. The upgrade is being implemented as part of the ongoing effort to strengthen information security across the Secretariat and in accordance with the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2004/15 on the use of information and communications technology resources and data. Its objective is to increase the efficiency of the e-mail system and to protect users, as well as critical and sensitive United Nations information and systems, from e-mail-based security threats. The upgrade of the technology will not modify the existing policy and practice in place of automatically filtering e-mail messages and attachments. Users are reminded to adhere to all provisions stipulated in sections 3 (on official use) and 4 (on limited personal use) of the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2004/15. It is recalled that the Organization retains all rights related to ICT resources and data (sect. 6) and that all use of ICT resources and data is subject to monitoring and investigation (sect. 7).

3. The upgraded filter is designed to automatically identify unsolicited, commercial e-mail messages (spam) and prevent them from being delivered to a user's inbox. All messages that originate from systems that are identified as sources of spam will be rejected, and an error message indicating the reason for rejection will be provided to the sender's e-mail system. Messages that are identified as spam on the basis of automated analysis of the message will be delivered to users' "junk" folder.[1]

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* The present circular will be in effect until further notice.

** For a definition of authorized users of information and communications technology resources, see ST/SGB/2004/15.

[1] Messages will continue to be modified by adding the indicator "[SPAM]" at the beginning of the subject line; automatic mail rules already defined in users' mailboxes will transparently move such messages to the "junk" folder. However, users can "white-list" messages from specific senders by creating rules in their mailbox to ensure delivery of such messages to their inbox. Further details are available from iSeek, at https://iseek.un.org/departmental_page/information-security-faqs#emailfilter.

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4. In addition, the filter will significantly improve the Organization's ability to automatically detect malicious content in e-mail messages and attachments. However, please note that, since no solution can be fully expected to detect all such content, malicious e-mail messages and attachments will continue to present a significant threat to the security of the Organization's ICT resources and data, as well as users' personal information.

5. Users are therefore reminded to remain vigilant and exercise extreme caution when dealing with e-mail messages containing attachments. Any unsolicited message that contains an attachment should be considered highly suspicious, even if the subject line or content may appear legitimate. Such messages should be deleted unread or reported to the Office of Information and Communications Technology, at abuse@un.org. Furthermore, under no circumstances should users respond to messages that request passwords; such messages should also be reported to the Office.

6. Additional information about the Organization's information security activities, including the mandatory information security awareness course, is available from http://infosec.un.org.

7. In order to minimize potential operational disruptions, the upgrade will be implemented in phases. As a result, users may experience temporary inconsistencies, as messages may be routed through either the existing filter or the new filter during the transition period. Therefore, users are advised to check both the inbox and the "junk" folder during this period. Detailed information, including specific dates, will be communicated to affected user groups as appropriate.

8. Users' privacy and protection and the privacy of the Organization's work are a critical part of its security posture, and the Organization counts on users' assistance.